

Indian Education for All Museum and School Grants Awarded

Contact: Tara Jensen, Office of Public Instruction 444-3559
Tom Cook, Montana Historical Society, 444-1645

Released: Receipt

The Office of Public Instruction and the Montana Historical Society today announced a unique partnership to foster Indian Education for All learning opportunities for museum professionals and public school teachers. "Best Practices in Museum Education: Museums and Schools as Co-Educators" is a grant program for ten museum-school teams around the state.

"The Office of Public Instruction and the Montana Historical Society have long been educational partners. This is a new and creative way to help form similar partnerships between small museums and local schools districts to help implement Indian Education for All," noted State Superintendent Linda McCulloch.

Richard Sims, Director of the Montana Historical Society, is also serving as project coordinator for "Best Practices" and will write the project's best practices guide. Sims said, "As an anthropologist and new Montanan, I will learn along with the participants as we verify and protect Montana Indian materials and imagine the best use of those materials in a learning environment. My colleagues at the Office of Public Instruction will be central to this effort."

Participants will learn new ways to connect museum work with public education, using museum holdings of Indian artifacts, art, and documents as the basis for innovative education programs. Teachers will become more familiar with the museums in their communities, and each museum will improve the storage or exhibition of their Native American collections in order to ensure and increase access to local schools. Together, museums and schools will expand their collaborations and further promote the goals of Indian Education for All.

The ten museum-school teams involved in this intensive ten-week project include: Glacier County Historical Society and the Cut Bank School District, Upper Musselshell Historical Society and the Harlowton School District, Old Fort Benton and the Fort Benton School District, Museum of the Rockies and the Belgrade School District, Phillips County Museum and the Malta School District, Valley County Museum and the Glasgow School District, Carbon County Historical Society and the Red Lodge School District, C.M. Russell Museum and the Great Falls School District, Hockaday Museum of Art in Kalispell and the Whitefish School District, and Chief Plenty Coups State Park and Museum and Pryor School District.

The Montana Historical Society will host a 3-day seminar in Helena for the "Best Practices" participants in early June. Each museum-school team will also visit another museum in Montana to compare curatorial and educational programs. It is a primary goal of this project, that in addition to fostering new collaborations and partnerships between museums and schools, that the best practices guide serve future work around Montana.